

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	USNW-00	DODE-00
	DS-00	EAP-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIG-00
	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	FMPC-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	ECA-00	IIP-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00	/001W

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6972
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 001930

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2014
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [GH](#)
SUBJECT: GHANA'S NATIONAL REFORM PARTY: PROMOTING REFORM
BUT TOO SMALL TO BE RELEVANT

REF: 00ACCRA7799

Classified By: Charge Jerry Lanier for reasons 1.5 d and e.

¶1. (C) Summary: On September 21, Charge and poloffs met with leaders of the National Reform Party (NRP). A minor party with no presidential candidate in the December elections, the NRP is contesting in ten parliamentary seats and hopes its anti-corruption/good grassroots governance message will influence the political debate. The NRP predicts the eventual decline and break-up of whichever major party loses the election. They hope the USG can help convince Ghanaian President Kufuor not to exaggerate security concerns in the election and can bolster the efforts of the Election Commission. End summary.

¶2. (C) On September 21, Charge and poloffs hosted a lunch for National Reform Party (NRP) leader Augustus "Goosie" Tanoh and several other NRP officials to discuss the December election and the NRP's political views. Charge noted that we were meeting with all the political parties, as well as the Election Commission and others, to reinforce our hope for a free and fair election in Ghana and to explore what useful role the USG might play in the process.

Background

¶3. (SBU) The NRP was founded in 2000 by a break-away group from National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NRP got only about one percent of the vote in the 2000 national elections and won no seats in parliament. However, observers believe its participation in the election cost the NDC fifteen parliamentary seats, ultimately benefiting the National Patriotic Party (NPP) and some independent candidates. At a September 2004 Delegate Congress, the NRP decided that because of its severe financial difficulties it would not field a presidential candidate in 2004, although it would support some parliamentary candidates. Goosie Tanoh, the NRP's presidential candidate in 2000, is a former lawyer and DCM in the Ghanaian Mission to the United Nations and now runs a food exporting company.

NRP Sitting Out This Election

¶4. (C) Tanoh told Charge the NRP would field ten parliamentary candidates but would stay out of the presidential race and avoid choosing between the NDC and NPP. The NRP was in a "lifetime pursuit" of better governance in Ghana, stressing greater community involvement, devolution of power, and improved public accountability. The NRP seeks a greater policy role for local district assemblies, the direct election of district chief executives, and increased capacity building and resource devolution at local levels. Tanoh and his colleagues highlighted inadequacies and corruption in education and health. He said the party was still developing its manifesto, although it would not change significantly from its left-of-center 2000 election manifesto.

A Make or Break Election

¶5. (C) Tanoh opined that the 2004 election would be close and peaceful. He dismissed concerns raised by some in the NPP that the NDC was recruiting foreign mercenaries to disrupt the upcoming elections. This was unfounded fear-mongering by Ghanaian security forces seeking to bolster their own importance, Tanoh said. Nonetheless, he predicted a major post-election realignment. Both the NPP and NDC are

split by strong internal divisions which are being suppressed for the election campaign, he said. Some in the NDC see presidential candidate John Evans Atta Mills as an outsider and some have a strong dislike for former president J.J. Rawlings. Elements in the NPP dislike its candidate, President John Kufuor, and foresee a succession crisis when he leaves the political stage. Whichever party loses this election will "begin a long tailspin of disintegration", according to Tanoh. With so much at stake, corruption is rampant in both camps - individuals are paying large sums to get party tickets, businesses are being squeezed for funds, and voters are being wooed with money and contracts, Tanoh alleged.

What the USG Can Do?

16. (C) Charge asked Tanoh what useful role he thought the USG and other foreign governments can play in the upcoming elections. Tanoh hoped the USG could help convince President Kufuor not to exaggerate security concerns in this election. He urged moral support for the Election Commission, which he criticized as "very laid back" about election-related problems. USG and other foreign observers would help lend

credibility to the election process, especially if the results are close.

Comment

17. (C) Without a single parliamentary seat and unable to forge an alliance with other small parties, the NRP is at present a minor force in Ghanaian politics. As reported reftel, in a lunch former US Ambassador Robinson hosted for Tanoh before the 2000 election, the candidate was brimming with confidence and outlined a clear stance on a range of economic and social issues. This week he was low-key and cynical. He had difficulty describing the NRP's plank and appeared to lack hands-on knowledge about party activities. He complained about politically-motivated efforts by the NPP to undermine his business interests. He and his colleagues appear to be waiting on the sidelines of Ghanaian politics to play a more prominent role when, in their estimation, the two major parties eventually collapse. In our view, neither the NPP nor the NDC appear on a path toward disintegration any time soon.

LANIER

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